

Grant and Colfax for White House

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Ulysses S. Grant, the eighteenth president of the United States of America, was born Hiram Ulysses Grant on April 17, 1822, to Jesse and Hanna Grant in Point Pleasant, Ohio. He attended local schools and had two younger brothers: Orvil and Simpson. With the help of his father, Grant accepted an offer by Thomas Morris, then a United States Senator from Ohio, to attend West Point.

After West Point, Grant's military achievements in the Mexican War as well as the Civil War helped him become what he thought was the most popular man in America. This popularity would help him to become President. Grant was not the only one who thought that he should be President. Gideon Welles, an intern of President Andrew Johnson during the Reconstruction period said, "I am becoming impressed with the idea that Grant may prove a dangerous man. He is devoid of patriotism, is ignorant but cunning, yet greedy for office."

President Johnson, who became the first president to be impeached, became more and more unpopular as his clashes with Congress impeded the legislative process. He became so unpopular that his party split into Moderate and Radical Republicans. The Radicals were in favor of pushing the South and giving African Americans the right to vote while the moderates favored rapid restoration of the South and the exclusion of African

Americans in the electorate process. The Radical Republicans eventually gained the majority in the Republican Party and decided to nominate Johnson for re-election to the White House.

At the Republican Convention of 1868, which was held at Crosby's Opera House in Chicago, Illinois, 8,000 Republicans met to decide who their next presidential candidate would be. They unanimously nominated Ulysses S. Grant, who did not even like politics or politicians, as the Republican Party's nomination for the White House. They then chose Schuler Colfax, who at the time was Speaker of the House of Representatives, to be the Vice-President candidate. In his acceptance speech for his nomination, Grant said: "If elected to the office of President of the United States. It will be my endeavor to administer all the laws in good faith, with economy, and with the view of giving peace and quiet, and protection everywhere. Peace and universal prosperity and its sequence with economy of administration will lighten the burden of taxation, while it constantly reduces the National debt. Let us live in peace."

With this well-planned speech, Grant kicked off his election campaign for presidency. This campaign would rely on Grant's military popularity to get votes for the presidency.

A little less than two months after the Republican convention, the Democrats had their convention from July 4-9, 1868, in New York City. At the beginning of their convention, Supreme Court Chief Justice Samuel Chase was heavily favored to take the Democratic nomination for the presidency. He declined though because he wanted to

stay on the Supreme Court where he could help his party for life. President Andrew Johnson, now disliked by the Republicans, was now seeking the Democratic ticket and standing in his way was Horatio Seymour, the convention chairman, and George Pendelton, the 1864 candidate for Vice-President. After many ballots, there was a movement towards Horatio Seymour and he was eventually chosen as the Democratic candidate for the presidency. His vice-presidential candidate was Francis P. Blair of Missouri.

The election was now on between Grant and Seymour. Unlike most candidates before him, Grant participated little in his campaign for the White House, remaining much of the time in his home in Galena, Illinois. He did go to a graduation ceremony at West Point; this was one of his few moments of publicity. Instead of campaigning himself, Grant let the media campaign for him. Reporters followed his journeys during the campaign and filled newspapers with homely accounts of the simple soldier whom people were calling to the White House. In Maine, the Republican members of the legislature adopted the resolution: "That on behalf of the Union Republicans of Maine, we follow the logic of events in indicating as our choice for the next President to the United States, him who is first in the hearts of the American people, General Ulysses S. Grant."

With little effort in the campaign, Ulysses S. Grant won the election of 1869 and became the eighteenth president of the United States. Grant won the Electoral College within 214 votes. He won the popular vote 52.7 percent to 47.3 percent. The announcement was made by Ben Wade, presiding officer of the joint convention of the United States Senate and House of Representatives on February 10, 1869. When Grant

heard the news he told his wife, Julia, “I’m afraid I am elected.” Perhaps Grant new he would have problems in the presidency.

At his inauguration ceremony, Grant refused to ride in the same coach as the exiting president Andrew Jackson. This moment of tension did not halt the progression of the most extravagant presidential inauguration yet. It was filled with eight full divisions of marching soldiers and it was the first to require special tickets for admission to the Capital. In his inaugural speech, Grant talked about the usual improvements that must

be made, such as improving foreign relations and reducing the national debt. But he made a radical statement that at the time was probably not widely accepted. Grant said “the proper treatment of the original occupants of this land – the Indians are deserving of careful study. I will favor any course toward them which tends to their civilization and ultimate citizenship.” Native Americans at the time were seen as obstacles to the westward movement; Grant’s statement was very radical indeed for his time.

With almost no work, Ulysses S. Grant won the election. The opposing candidate did not even stand a chance. With the help of the media, a few publicity events, and his military accomplishments, Ulysses S. Grant won the election of 1869 with supreme confidence and became the eighteenth President of the United States of America.

[From *1869 Democratic Convention*, www.multied.com/elections/conventions/1869

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